

Within this paper there will be a reflection on what I have learned about quality of services. It will discuss the meaning of quality, why it is important and how it is measured. This paper will also look in depth at what quality means for settings, staff and parents, whilst looking over the tools of different services on what works and what does not work within a setting and seeing what needs to be changed for the future of practice.

All early year's settings provide a high quality of care and service to meet the standards for inspectors of CIW, so practitioners can provide appropriate care and services for child, parents, and staff (King and Newstead, 2019). Quality is proved through all early year's settings as Gregoriadis *et al.* (2016) explains, quality is seen as how effective a setting could be based on how practitioners prove their quality of service and care to families. Additional, Barnes and Melhuish (2017) agree explaining, quality is also seen as how the setting presents itself towards service users, as their child will be attending the setting. Quality is also important for setting services and care as Lewis and West (2017) explain, it helps practitioners to understand how to improve on their own services and care from feedback provided from parents. Moreover, Blanden, Hansen and McNally (2017) discuss, all staff can examine together on what is working well within the setting and suggest recommendations needed to provide a better standard of service and care. Quality is measured by using tools as Cottle and Alexander (2012) explain, these tools could measure the quality of indoor and outdoor environments by seeing if they are providing appropriate resources, environments, space and health and safety. Similarly, Buckley, Martin and Curtin (2020) explain, quality can also be measured by looking at adult interaction by seeing if the adult is using appropriate language during an activity or staff allowing the child to use exploration and imaginative skills.

Quality will show based on the setting standards of service and care as Helmerhorst *et al.* (2015) explain, settings will be providing a high quality of service by providing a safe and hygienic environment full of toys, learning resources and equipment for learning and play. Additional, Ansari and Pianta (2018) agree explaining, settings will also supply nutritional snacks and foods following the healthy eating plan, providing plenty of praise and encouragement during play and learning to support the high-quality service and care.

The high quality and care of the setting will have a positive impact on children as Halfon and Langford (2015) state, children will feel safe and secure within the setting as they are having their needs met and not being judged based on their personality and abilities. Furthermore, Cárcamo *et al.* (2014) agrees explaining children will feel more comfortable attending the setting, as their interests are being implemented in activities and learning, allowing them to thrive in their developmental learning. Quality also supports a positive partnership for parents as Douglass and Gittell (2012) explain, both parents and staff will be working together to support the child's learning and families will also appreciate the support for their child's needs. In addition, Halle *et al.* (2019) agrees explaining, parents will be relieved and feel more confident leaving their child with a high-quality setting, as they know their child will be secure and safe and their needs are met. Practitioners learn from their own quality of care and service to improve on their own practice (Osgood, 2020). Practitioners have an impact on the setting quality as Sollars (2020) explains, teamworking skills are important as practitioners will discuss any recommendations needed for the setting, or any additional training required to help improve the setting's quality. Moreover, Hallet (2013) concurs explaining, to build a positive relationship with every child and parent to practitioners need to understand each child's development and provide support for children and parents who need it.

For practitioners to understand how to improve and recommend changes within their quality they use tools that assess the early years quality of care and services (Cottle and Alexander, 2012). One of these tools could be Infant/Toddler Environment scale third edition. Bjørnstad, Baustad and Alvestad (2019) define, the ITERS as an assessment tool that focuses in depth on the environment that staff, infants and toddlers use. Furthermore, Harms *et al.* (2017) discuss the scale of these assessments, covering indoor and outdoor environments which list off different levels of quality related to the environment. There is a purpose for the tools which influence the quality of care and services as Vist and Os (2020) explain, the purpose of these tools is for practitioners to analyse the setting environments, to also see if the standard of quality is kept high and if there are any changes that need to be made.

There are some benefits from using these tool and drawbacks. The tools of the scales and subscales are very detailed and organized as Chan (2019) explains, the scales show detailed sub scales on the environment for practitioners to know how to keep

standards and improve the quality of the indoor/ outdoor environment. In addition, Kleppe (2018) discusses, for the subscales being organized, it gives the assessor a more accurate score of the environments and to list any changes or improvements needed for the setting. However, it only seems to detail the environment as Helmerhorst *et al.* (2017) states, the scales seem to only detail the environments of the setting and not include the child and adult interactions, team working and partnerships with staff and families. Furthermore, La Paro, Williamson and Hatfield (2014) agree explaining, the other scales of quality are underrepresenting within the setting as there seems to only be one focus with these scales and each quality must be assessed separately. The criteria subscales are clear and understandable as Rentzou (2017) explains, the subscales only focus on one quality which is the environment so practitioners will find it easy to assess one section of quality. However, some practitioners may need additional training as Hansen and Broekhuizen (2021) explain, some practitioners may lack the experience of working in early years and may not understand what is required for a high quality of care for the setting.

It is also not time consuming as there is only one focus as Bjørnstad and Os (2018) explain, a practitioner can assess and score the environment quality on their own as there is only one focus of quality, and this allows practitioners to have more time with the children. Moreover, Torr (2019) agrees explaining, it also focuses on the practitioner's interactions and the role of the teacher of the environment, by reflecting on their own quality to see if they may need any improvements on their quality within the setting. However, some practitioners may have a different opinions or feedback from others as Barros and Leal (2015) explain, practitioners may have a different opinion to the practitioner who assessed the environment and may cause a disagreement over the scoring assessment. It also covers the use of materials and resources within children's learning and play as Manning *et al.* (2019) discuss, resources and materials would be measured on the quality by seeing if they are suitable for the child or if they need to be repaired to avoid harm. In addition, Biersteker *et al.* (2016) agree explaining, measuring the quality of toys and resources will help practitioners to have a wider understanding that quality is not just measured by the environment it is also the resources, equipment and toys used within the setting. The scale also assesses the practitioners' interactions with the environment as Megalonidou (2020) explains, during this time the assessor will also assess their own

quality of care within their environment by assessing their interactions with the environment. Furthermore, La Paro, Williamson and Hatfield (2014) agree stating, practitioners could then use this time to set recommendations and changes needed for the environment and for themselves and other staff members if needed.

There is also another type of tool scale that practitioners can use for assessing the quality of care in the setting. Another one of these tools are Sustain shared thinking and Emotional Well-being Scales as Siraj, Kingston and Melhuish (2015) explain, the STEW scale is another assessment which focuses on the role of the adult within the setting. Moreover, Howard *et al.* (2018) agrees explaining, it looks more in-depth on the pedagogy practice by looking into the interaction with children and how they support children with their development and learning. There is a purpose for this assessment tool as Melhuish (2016) explains, it helps practitioners to self-reflect on their own practice on why and how they can improve it by the interaction with the children during learning activities and play. Furthermore, Sutherland and Mukadam (2018) explain, practitioners can also reflect on their own interactions with the children for example, are they allowing children to be independent, are they taking in the child's interest or are they using sustain shared thinking during a learning activity?

There are some advantages and disadvantages of using this assessment tool. The STEW scales and sub scales are very detailed on adult interactions as Waters and MacDonald (2020) explain, it gives details on how adult interactions are impacting on a child's learning development and are they making learning activities interesting and engaging for children. However, these scales seem to be aimed for practitioners who have experience with working with children as Siraj-Blatchford, Kingston and Melhuish (2015) state, new or inexperienced practitioners may struggle using this as they may not have enough or no experience when working with children. Furthermore, Melhuish, Siraj and Kingston (2015) agree explaining, practitioners who are inexperienced may not understand child development or important learning interactions, thus may need extra training to understand children's development and sustain shared thinking interactions. The STEW also benefits practitioners to reflect on their interactions and supportive learning with learning as Allingham (2015) explains, practitioners reflect on how they interact with adults and the child or children's interactions and see if there is enough communication and open-ended questions being asked during activities. In addition, Powers and Packer (2017) state, the scales could also help practitioners to

reflect on how effective their learning activities are with children, by looking on how engaged they are and to also listen closely to their response to open-ended questions and sustained shared thinking. The SSTEW scale is a very clear guide for practitioners to understand as Vivanti *et al.* (2019) explain, the scale only discusses one assessment which is adult interaction, which is split into sub-scales detailing adult and childrens interactions and activity engagements. However, similarly to the first tool it only focuses on certain qualities as Thi, Yodosawa and Nakatsubo (2019) state, the SSTEW scales seem to only have one quality focus thus, using another assessment scale to assess the other qualities. The SSTEW also helps practitioners to develop their professional learning as Hoare (no date) states, while assessing the quality of interactions of adult and child the practitioner could use their professional development to see if they need any improvement or if there is a need for additional training to improve the quality of services. Furthermore, Melhuish *et al.* (2016) explain it also helps practitioners to understand the emotional and wellbeing needs of children by understanding the behaviours of children thus, supporting effective learning for children. SSTEW also supports in improving planning and teaching strategies for practitioners as Roberts, Griggs, and Robb (2017) explain, practitioners will analyse past and present interactions and learning activities with children to learn what worked well with activities and what did not, to see if there is a need to improve strategies. Moreover, Coventry City Council (2019) state, some children have specific needs so if one activity does not cater to a child's need, practitioners will learn from this and change their strategies to suit every child's needs.

Overall, this module has been a new experience for me, and I have learned a lot throughout this whole module. Firstly, I will discuss the presentation. My role in the presentation was team leader which was a new experience for me and the topic I choose to cover quality, was parent partnership. From the group presentation I learned and understood more about quality of care and service. I agree that it is important to understand and learn from it, as practitioners can come together and discuss their own quality of service within the setting and to reflect on their own practitioners and how they can improve their quality of care and service. I also know how important it is to have a positive partnership with parents and child, as practitioners use parents' feedback to improve their own practice and quality within a setting. I also learnt that there is a lot of preparation and work needed to improve high quality of care for all

early year's settings, by ensuring all policies are up to date, to make sure all childrens and family's needs are being meet and to make sure all staff paperwork and training are up to date. Being a team leader was a great experience and I would be happy to be a leader again as I have learned the team leader is there to help and support all staff members on what they need to do to improve quality and to listen to each recommendation and changes that can improve quality for the better.

The reflection paper was also new to me as I did not know that there were tools to assess qualities within a setting. The two tools chosen were ITERS and SSTEWS, which were very interesting and gave me a better understanding of the importance of assessing quality within a setting. ITERS was about indoor and outdoor environments and discusses the resources, toys, materials and environment spaces. This is great from my own experience, as I can use this scale to analyse the quality of an environment setting whereby I can make my own recommendations that may improve quality. However, I did find it hard to find information on ITERS as it was new to me, and I did not know what I was looking for in my reflective paper. Another tool I researched was the SSTEWS scale. From what I have learned, the scale was good as it was about children and adult interactions, sustain shared thinking and emotional welling being. I can see now why the scale is based on adult and child interactions, as I could learn from children interaction from their learning and play activities and I could learn from children feedback and the score to improve my own professional learning and change activities over time to meet all children needs. Even though SSTEWS was new to me, it was very interesting in that I would be able to evaluate and improve my own professional learning and provide better practice with children, parents and staff.

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